

Florida's Great Northwest – WIRED Northwest Florida



The WIRED Northwest Florida Initiative is designed to create high wage, high skill jobs in the target industries of Aerospace and Defense, Life Science (Medical Device Manufacturing, Medical Technologies, Health Services, and Biotechnology), Information Technology and Electronics Engineering, and Construction Services.

Key to the successful implementation of the initiative is the development of a governance council and industry councils in each of the targeted industries. Each council incorporates membership from the regional partners, including businesses actively engaged in the target industry. To assure this is a business-driven approach, a minimum of 50% of each council's membership will be from business. The initiative includes:

- Entrepreneurship development through a grant program designed to enable the start-up companies to secure seed capital;
- Grants enabling job training for new and existing businesses in the target industries;
- Secondary education academy development that is 1) geared for skills related to entry-level employment in targeted industries or 2) accelerated, intense college preparation in the areas of math and science;
- Post-secondary training and education programs that develop workforce skills needed by the target industries;
- Outreach programs to attract sufficient quantities of students of all ages into the skills training programs to meet workforce demands;
- A strategic development component designed to ensure the workforce investment programs are developing the skills necessary to meet current and future target industry needs.

The initiative is primarily established as a performance-based grant program that requires a 100% match, turning a \$15 million investment into a \$30 million initiative. Incorporated into the initiative are guidelines that enhance the long-term sustainability of the program, establish a minimum wage and benefit structure for which job creation assistance will be provided, and incorporate the workforce investment boards and their associated one-stop workforce development centers into the initiative governance and program delivery.



Strategic partners include:

- Twelve post-secondary institutions including: Florida State University, University of West Florida, University of Florida, Chipola College, Okaloosa Walton College, Tallahassee Community College, Gulf Coast Community College, Pensacola Junior College, George Stone Career Center, Locklin Technical Center, Haney Technical Center, Washington-Holmes Technical Center
- Sixteen countywide school districts
- Six regional workforce boards including Chipola Regional, Gulf Coast, Okaloosa Walton Counties, Escarosa, and Workforce Plus.
- Four Florida Small Business Development Network regions
- St. Joe Foundation, Gulf Power Foundation, and education foundations associated with K-12 and post secondary educational institutions
- Private sector business involvement representing employers in the target industries, industry association groups, finance industry, and engineering and architectural design
- Region's county economic development organizations and chambers of commerce.



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